

Artichoke

History

Artichokes are considered one of the world's oldest foods. They are native to the Mediterranean area and are a member of the sunflower family. The ancestor of the artichoke is the North African thistle, which still grows in the wild today. Artichokes were first harvested by people in the Middle East.

The artichoke gained most of its popularity in ancient Rome and Greece around 70 A.D. Artichokes remained popular until the fall of the Roman Empire. It was not until the 1400s when they regained popularity in Florence, Italy. Their popularity spread, and by the 1500s they were being eaten throughout France.

Artichokes originally came to the United States in the early 1800s when French immigrants started growing the vegetable in the Louisiana territory. It wasn't until the early 1900s when the artichoke became a US success. Italian immigrants in California started growing artichokes and selling them commercially. Today, California grows nearly 100 percent of all the artichokes sold in the US.



Fun Facts

- Castroville, CA is known as the “Artichoke Capital of the World”
- Marilyn Monroe was the “Artichoke Queen” in 1947
- The portion of the artichoke that we eat is actually a flower bud
- Artichoke plants must grow for one year before the flower can be harvested
- Artichokes are very delicate and must be picked by hand
- The artichoke plant only produces artichokes for 5-10 years
- The artichoke plant grows to be six feet wide and 3-4 feet tall
- If artichoke plants are allowed to flower, the blossoms are 6-7 inches wide and a violet-blue color



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